UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/1990/5/Add.27
7 August 1995

Original: ENGLISH

Substantial session of 1996

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Initial reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

Addendum

Guyana* **

[28 June 1995]

---

* The initial report submitted by the Government of Guyana concerning rights covered by articles 13 to 15 (E/1982/3/Add.5, 29 and 32) was considered by the Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its 1984 and 1985 sessions (see E/1984/WG.1/SR.20, 22 and E/1985/WG.1/SR.6).

** The information submitted by Guyana in accordance with the guidelines concerning the initial part of reports of States parties is contained in the core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.61).

GE.95-18268 (E)

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
Introduction		1 - 4	3
IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF THE COVENANT		1 - 161	4
Article 1 -	The right to self-determination	5 - 9	4
Article 2 -	Steps taken to achieve the rights recognized in the Covenant	10 - 14	4
Article 6 -	The right to work	15 - 23	5
Article 7 -	The right to just and favourable conditions of work	24 - 35	6
Article 8 -	The right to form trade unions	36 - 42	8
Article 9 -	The right to social security, including social insurance	43 - 49	9
Article 10 -	The family	50 - 66	10
Article 11 -	The right to an adequate standard of living	67 - 82	14
Article 12 -	The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health	83 - 106	17
Article 13 -	The right of everyone to education	107 - 151	22
Article 15 -	The right to take part in cultural life	152 - 161	29

Annexes*

I. Administrative Map of Guyana

II. Guyana: Selected socio-economic indicators 1991-1994

III. Exchange rate of CARICOM countries

IV. Food availability: production of selected commodities 1977-1988

V. Data on education

VI. Bibliography

* Available for consultation in the files of the Centre for Human Rights.

Introduction

1. In ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Government of Guyana undertook the responsibility to protect the rights of its citizens and provide the resources to guarantee the realization of those rights. In submitting this report, the Government has attempted to indicate the ways in which these rights are protected by citing the legislative and other measures which have been adopted to guarantee them. It has also endeavoured to illustrate the steps which have been taken in order to improve and enhance the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens.

2. With a small population and abundant natural and mineral resources, Guyana ought to have experienced rapid growth leading to the economic and social improvement of its people. However, due to corruption, mismanagement, extravagance, the lack of democracy, poor economic and fiscal policies and above all a huge debt burden which consumes nearly 50 per cent of State revenues and approximately 25 per cent of foreign earnings, a virtual bankrupt situation wrecked infrastructure and the largest per capita income in the western hemisphere.

3. In 1985 the previous Government adopted a Structural Adjustment Programme. Though necessary, the programme has been fraught with many contradictions and difficulties. Since the new Government assumed power in October 1992, it has reordered priorities and is directing more resources to the critical areas of health, education and housing. It is setting an example of good governance; representative and participatory democracy; consensus building; economic growth with social justice and equity; firm steps towards the eradication of poverty, extravagance, corruption and discrimination. It is extending democracy by holding municipal and village elections. Such elections were last held in 1970 and widely accepted as rigged. At the grass-roots level the Government is rapidly mobilizing the people in their respective communities for self-help activities in infrastructural rehabilitation and community policing in the fight against crime, drug trafficking and other anti-social activities.

4. The following report therefore seeks to document developments in connection with the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The report should be viewed as a complete country report on articles 1-15 of the Covenant.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF THE COVENANT

Article 1 - The right to self-determination

5. Guyana is a democracy in which its citizens are free to determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development. As stated in Part 1, Chapter 1 of the Constitution, "Guyana is an indivisible, secular, democratic sovereign State ... ."

6. The Constitution guarantees the right to form political parties and the freedom of action of those parties, a right which is considered to be one of the stronger indicators of the right to self-determination. The Constitution also guarantees the protection of fundamental rights such as the right to freedom of conscience, the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of assembly and association. In this context persons are uninhibited in choosing their political parties and voting is by secret ballot during elections.

7. Persons are free to engage in activities which would aid their economic, social and cultural development in so far as such development does not encroach on the rights and freedoms of other individuals. Private enterprise, the right to own personal property and the right of inheritance are all guaranteed under Chapter II of the Constitution.

8. The extent to which these rights can be enforced is dependent on the level of entrenchment in the Constitution and the Laws of Guyana. In this context they are considered statements of principles and entitlement rather than fundamental rights as opposed to the rights enshrined in articles 138-151 of the Constitution. The rights embodied in articles 138-151, which include the right to life, liberty, protection from slavery and forced labour, and protection from inhumane treatment, are directly enforceable in the courts.

9. At the international level, Guyana has unfailingly supported the right of peoples to self-determination. It has supported many resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly in that regard.

Article 2 - Steps taken to achieve the rights recognized in the Covenant

10. The Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the legislative Acts contained in the Laws of Guyana form the basis for the realization of the rights recognized in the Covenant. These legal instruments are primarily applicable to citizens of Guyana.

11. The status of non-nationals in Guyana is governed by Chapters 14:03 to 14:05 of the Laws of Guyana. These are the Aliens (Immigration and Registration) Act, the Status of Aliens Act and the Expulsion of Undesirables Act respectively.

12. Non-nationals enjoy most of the rights recognized by the Covenant. They are allowed to work once the relevant work permit has been obtained from the Government.

Participation in development cooperation

13. Guyana has undertaken, through international assistance and cooperation, to improve the economic and social conditions of its citizens. Main cooperation activities are linked with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the European Union, the Commonwealth and other regional organizations. The Government also undertakes development cooperation through its bilateral relations with both developing and developed countries.

14. Guyana has entered into cooperation agreements with the EU, UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WHO, PAHO and UNESCO, agencies which are providing financial and technical assistance in areas such as education, health, water supply and housing.

Article 6 - The right to work

15. Article 22.1 of the Constitution of Guyana makes provision for every citizen to have the right to work. Every citizen is free to select his area of work in accordance with social requirements and personal qualification. Persons are also accorded the right to be rewarded in accordance with the nature, quality and quantity of their work.

Information on the trends in employment, underemployment and unemployment

16. Information on the trends in employment, underemployment and unemployment is very limited due to poor record-keeping in previous years. The Recruitment and Placement Services of the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, whose main task is to place individuals seeking employment in the clerical/office support and the technical craft and skilled and semi-skilled operatives/unskilled fields, has indicated that the total number of persons employed 10 years ago was higher than the number 5 years ago. This information, however, does not reflect employment figures on a national scale. It simply reflects the number of persons who availed themselves of the services of the Ministry.

17. Unemployment in this period has been attributed mainly to unstable economic conditions. The highest percentage of unemployment was found among the early school leavers who were either unqualified or unskilled to fill vacancies. Apart from this group, the indigenous peoples who live in the hinterland areas are considered to be more disadvantaged because of their location. However, the increased economic activity, especially mining and logging in these areas, has resulted in increased jobs for residents.

Training

18. In order to ensure that persons are adequately equipped to work in their chosen fields, Government has in place several measures. These include vocational guidance and training programmes which are oriented towards those who are now on the threshold of choosing a career. Such programmes are mainly included in the curricula of schools, where counselling is also available for students.

19. There are also training systems which include government scholarship grants and awards by foreign Governments to persons. Those who fulfil the necessary academic criteria are trained either overseas or at home. Such programmes are administered by the Public Service Management which has a special training division to monitor scholarships.

20. Vocational training within industries is regulated by the Industrial Training Act (Cap. 39:04) which corresponds to ILO Recommendation No. 150 and ILO Convention No. 142. The provisions of this Act are realized through the Board of Industrial Training, a tripartite statutory body within the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security which represents employers, employees and the State. Under the Act various categories of apprentices and unskilled persons may choose vocational training in keeping with their aptitude and the needs of industry.

21. The work of the Board has been progressive. Between 1984 and 1989, the Board trained 735 persons within industry. For the period 1989-1993, a total of 1,688 persons were tained. However, because of perceived difficulties, extensive consultations were held which culminated in a number of amendments to the Act being drafted. The amendments, when implemented, will, inter alia, remove certain restrictions to the apprenticeship system such as the age limit, thus increasing the number of eligible persons who may be trained. They will also expand the scope of the Board's activities to promote and administer not only craft level apprenticeship, but also apprenticeship at the technical and professional level.

22. The Government is also considering the introduction of an Industrial Training Levy of 1-3 per cent of the wage bill of companies to supplement the cost of training which is at present borne mainly by the State. It is hoped that with this added revenue, the Government will be able to widen its outreach and more adequately provide vocational training for all levels of society.

23. It should be noted that both males and females have access to vocational training.

Article 7 - The right to just and favourable conditions of work

24. Article 29 (1) of the Constitution provides for women and men to enjoy equal rights and the same legal status in all spheres of economic life. Article 29 (11) accords women equal acess with men to academic, vocational and professional training and equal opportunities in employment, remuneration and promotion. These provisions are further enhanced by the Equal Rights Act of 1990. Section 2.3 of this Act provides for men and women to be paid equal remuneration for the same work or work of a similar nature. Section 2.4 prohibits discrimination in promotion on the grounds of sex.

Minimum wage

25. In order to ensure that every worker is able to provide a decent living for himself/herself and his/her family, the Government has established a minimum wage. A Tripartite Minimum Wage Committee which comprises

representatives of Government, employers and trade unions is responsible for reviewing and recommending appropriate changes in the rates.

26. A system of minimum wages has been established which covers employees in the following groups: grocery stores; dry goods stores; hardware stores; drug stores; cinemas; service stations; garment factories; watchmen; sawmills; timber grants; restaurants; hotels; spirit shops. Those who are outside the minimum wage protection packages are usually covered by union agreements.

27. In Guyana the payment of minimum wages is guaranteed by Minimum Wage Orders which have the force of law. When determining the wage level, the negotiating parties usually take into account the needs of the workers and their families, the prevailing wage rates in other sectors of the economy and the ability of specific industries to pay, among other things.

28. In 1988 the minimum wage rate was US$ 17.20 per week. In 1994 this figure stood at approximately US$ 9.90 per week. It may be noted here that although the minimum wage progressively increased in terms of the Guyana dollar, the high exchange rate has resulted in a lower figure when converted into United States dollars. Labour Officers in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security are tasked with enforcing the Minimum Wage Orders.

29. There is no known inequality in the remuneration of men and women. Minimum wages are paid without any discrimination based on sex, colour, race or any other discriminatory factor.

Occupational safety and health

30. There is an Occupational Safety and Health Division within the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security. The aim of this Division is to improve the working conditions of employees and ensure a healthy working environment with strong emphasis on preventive rather than curative measures. Its main tasks are to:

(a) Inspect workplaces in order to identify hazards and ensure compliance with safety legislation;

(b) Investigate workplace accidents in order to prevent similar occurrences;

(c) Organize seminars and lectures on occupational safety and health topics;

(d) Register certificates for factories and steam boilers.

31. A National Policy on Occupational Safety and Health was tabled in Parliament in November 1993. This policy is intended to serve as a guide to good workplace safety and health practice and is applicable to all spheres of economic activity and all categories of workers. It also outlines sectoral responsibilities.

32. Apart from the Division and its functions, there is a National Advisory Council on Occupational Safety and Health which was established in 1993. The Council has a membership of 15 persons who represent 12 agencies. To date the Council has collaborated with the Occupational Safety and Health Division in producing the above-mentioned National Policy on Occupational Safety and Health and promoted national consultations for legislation on the subject.

Rest and leisure

33. The Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana provides for the enjoyment of rest and leisure. Various labour legislation, including the Holiday with Pay Act, prescribe statutory hours of work for various categories of workers, e.g. workers in factories and manufacturing in general are required to work 8 hours per day while those in commercial businesses work 7¼ hours.

34. In March 1995, Parliament approved a new Holidays with Pay Bill which sought to repeal the Holidays with Pay Act of 1973. This Act was limited in scope and only covered certain categories of workers. The new Bill provides for every worker to be given not less than one day's holiday with pay for each month of employment. Workers who are employed on a half-day basis will have that half-day counted as one day for the purposes of the Bill. Holidays for workers who work on an hourly or daily basis will have 1 day for every 20 days or 1 day for every 160 hours worked.

35. Most workers, especially in factories and manufacturing, are paid twice the normal rate for working on Sundays and public holidays. This rate is enforceable under law.

Article 8 - The right to form trade unions

36. Article 147.1 of the Constitution protects every person from hindrance in the enjoyment of his freedom of assembly and association. This includes the right to assemble freely and associate with others. More particularly, it enshrines the right of every person to form or belong to trade unions in order to protect his interests.

37. This article of the Constitution is supplemented by the Trade Unions Act (Cap. 98:03) which governs the establishment of trade unions. The "Statutory Objects" of the Trade Union Act are defined as the regulation of the relations between workmen and masters, or between workmen and workmen, or between masters and masters, or the imposing of restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business, and also the provision of benefit to members. Under this Act, a minimum of seven persons is required to form a trade union before it can be registered with the Registrar of Unions. Under the provisions of article 28 of the Act, a person may become a member of a trade union upon attaining the age of 16 years. Any person may join a trade union with the exception of a member of the disciplined forces.

38. Article 31 of the Trade Unions Act provides for the amalgamation of trade unions with the consent of not less than two thirds of the members of any two or more trade unions.

39. There is no formal legislation for a confederation of trade unions. There is, however, a national federation known as the Trades' Union Congress which is registered in accordance with the provisions of the Trade Unions Act. The statutes of the trade unions also allow them to become members of international union organizations. All unions which represent government workers are federated under the Federated Union of Government Employees (FUGE).

40. There are at present 30 trade unions in Guyana which encompass approximately 47 per cent of workers. The major sectors unionized are as follows: the public sector; agriculture; clerical and commercial; transport; teaching; mining; industry; postal and telecommunications sector.

41. Unions function quite freely within the limitations of the law. There is no express legislation governing the right to strike and there is no legal restriction placed on the right to strike. Unions have organized strikes which have generally been peaceful and have been settled by negotiation. It is understood, however, that the right of certain categories of workers to strike is limited because of the essential nature of their work. These include those in the sectors of water and electricity. However, some foreign companies which have invested in the country have started to take disciplinary action against workers who went on strike. Some of the workers have been dismissed for breach of contract.

42. Workers in entities which are deemed essential services must, before taking strike action, inform the Minister of Labour of the existence of a trade dispute and allow him one month to set up the machinery for a settlement including, if necessary, a referral of the matter to the Arbitration Tribunal as specified in the Trade Unions Act. If the Minister does not act within the specified time-frame the workers can then take strike action. It should be noted, however, that workers have been in constant breach of this Act and no punitive action has been taken against them by the State.

Article 9 - The right to social security, including social insurance

43. The Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security has strived to implement progressive measures to ensure that persons receive adequate social security benefits. The Social Security Division of the Ministry is responsible for relief schemes which are governed by the provisions of the Poor Relief Act (Cap. 36:02) and the Old Age Pensions Act (Cap. 36:03). Relief schemes administered by the Division are non-contributory and are aimed primarily at providing financial assistance to old-age pensioners and members of the public.

44. Apart from the Division, there is a National Relief Committee which is also part of the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security. The Committee works in close collaboration with any other government agency or department or any social and voluntary organization within or outside of Guyana for the purpose of rendering assistance to persons in need. The Committee is expected to maintain a database of needy persons, and groups and institutions which represent the needy and less fortunate. It is also

expected to maintain a database of local and foreign persons, groups and institutions whose objectives and interest include providing relief to the needy.

45. Other social security benefits are governed by the provisions of the National Insurance and Social Security Act (Cap. 36:01) which is an Act to establish a system of national insurance and social security providing pecuniary payments by way of old-age benefit, invalidity benefit, survivor's benefit, sickness benefit, maternity benefit and funeral benefit. Every person who has attained the age of 16 years and gainfully occupied in insurable employment must be insured under the Act. Persons insured remain so for life. The Act also provides for the insurance of self-employed persons, persons under 16 years of age and persons over 65 years of age.

46. The following branches of social security exist: medical care; sickness benefit; maternity benefit; old-age benefit; invalidity benefit; survivor's benefit; employment injury benefit; funeral benefit.

47. Under the National Insurance Scheme, both employers and employees contribute on a weekly or monthly basis depending on the periodicity of the payment of wages and salaries. The ratio of contribution is 2/3:1/3 with employees contributing the latter. The National Insurance Scheme encompasses both the public and private sectors. It should be noted that benefits are paid based on claims presented irrespective of the sex of the presenter.

48. The scheme has recently moved to extend national insurance coverage for employed and self-employed persons. This move will allow the maximum amounts paid by the scheme for all benefits that are income related to be increased, e.g., sickness, maternity and injury benefits will have their maxima increased by more than 40 per cent. Other increases will encompass old-age and invalidity pensions, survivors' pensions and industrial disablement pension.

49. Benefits which are not wage related are now being subjected to an actuarial review and it is expected that the recommendations arising out of this review will either improve the amounts now paid as grants, or provide a different kind of benefit from that which is in existence.

Article 10 - The family

50. The Government of Guyana is a State party to the following conventions:

(a) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

(b) Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(c) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(d) Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women.

In 1994 Guyana's report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was submitted and considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

51. In Guyana the term family connotates a homogeneous social unit comprising parents and their children. It is the conventional understanding that a family stems from marriage or a fairly stable common-law union. There is also the "extended family" which can be defined as parents, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc., who are living together.

52. Pursuant to the provisions of articles 31-33 of the Marriage Act (Cap. 45:01), a person may enter into matrimony at the age of 18 years without the consent of others. Under this age, a proposed party to a marriage is considered a minor and the consent of his parents or guardian is required before a marriage can take place. Should the parent or guardian withhold their consent to a marriage, then a petition showing good cause may be made to a judge of the High Court of Guyana to allow the union.

53. Notwithstanding the above, a marriage shall be void if the parties or either of them is under the age of 16 in the case of a male, or under 14 in the case of a female.

Special measures of protection and assistance for the family

54. The Government has sought to provide suitable conditions which would enable mothers to work including legal protection and material and moral support. Such conditions include paid leave and other benefits for mothers and expectant mothers. Working mothers are entitled to three months' maternity leave with pay. This leave is usually taken after confinement. The National Insurance Scheme pays two thirds of the amount due while the remaining one third is paid by the employer. Mothers can also claim medical expenses, a percentage of which is reimbursed by the National Insurance Scheme.

55. To promote the growth of a stable and healthy family, special protection is normally accorded to mothers before and after childbirth. The Government has established Community Health Centres which cater for the pre- and post-natal needs of mothers and their offspring. The Centres provide medical care for pregnant women until the birth of their babies. After birth, mothers are required to take their children to the clinics for the relevant immunization and periodic checks which are conducted by trained personnel. From age 0-1 year, visits are compulsory once every month. Thereafter visits are quarterly or if the child is ill. This care continues until a child attains the age of three years, nine months and begins nursery school. Immunizations are then continued at school. All services at the Centres are provided free.

56. Apart from these Centres, the public hospitals are equipped with Maternity and Child Health Care Clinics. There are also private hospitals and health-care clinics.

57. It should be noted that all forms of protection and assistance which are granted to mothers and children are provided without any form of discrimination whatsoever.

58. There have been cases where women have not availed themselves of the services offered by the Government in maternity and child health care. Random surveys have shown that these women are generally from the poorer strata of society who have many children. As visits to clinics are not compulsory, there is no way to force expectant mothers to attend except through increased health education. Women from the hinterland areas also fall into this category. While some avail themselves of the services offered in the regions, there are some who, because of tradition and culture, stay in their villages to give birth. However, there are referral hospitals in the event of complications.

Special measures of protection and assistance for children

59. Pursuant to the provisions of the Maintenance Act (Cap. 45:03), parents are primarily bound to maintain their children under the age of 16 years. Such care should also be extended to those who are bodily or mentally infirm.

60. Article 30 of the Constitution establishes that all children born out of wedlock are entitled to the same legal rights and legal status as those enjoyed by children born in wedlock. It further states that all forms of discrimination against children on the basis of their being born out of wedlock are illegal. This provision is reflected in the Children Born Out of Wedlock (Bastardy) Act (Cap. 46:03) which provides for the maintenance and protection of children who are born out of wedlock. Under the provisions of this Act, fathers are obligated to maintain their children.

61. The Factory Act (Cap. 95:02) also makes provisions for the prohibition of employment of children in factories. The Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (Cap. 99:01), which is an Act to carry out certain conventions relating to the employment of women, young persons and children, further seeks to protect the interests of children. The Act defines the minimum age for child labour as 14 in the case of children working in family establishments and 16 in public employment. No child is allowed to work in industrial establishments, the only exception being where only family members are employed. Young persons cannot be employed for night work except in family undertakings. Penalties for violations are prescribed by law.

62. It is necessary here to point out some of the existing problems relating to child labour which inhibit the full enjoyment of children's rights. In a workshop held on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in which the Children Services Unit of the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security participated, several categories of child labour were identified. These included: agricultural work mainly on family farms; domestic work including care of siblings; working in sawmills; vending in the markets; river mining; municipal work; work in textile factories. The conditions of work, payment and hours worked by children were difficult to verify as neither the children, their employers nor their families were willing to disclose information which would lead to an end of the practice of child labour. It was also established that the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social

Security was extremely hard-pressed to carry out inspections and monitor conditions of work effectively because of a shortage of Labour Officers.

63. Some recommendations arising out of the Workshop included:

(a) Intensification of information gathering;

(b) Increase in resources to allow more effective monitoring programmes;

(c) Development of more effective programmes of social welfare;

(d) Increased penalties for violations of child labour laws;

(e) Review of health and safety measures;

(f) Promotion of public awareness of the problem;

(g) Elimination of distinction between "family" and "non-family" working establishments as the use of these terms infers acceptance of child labour.

These recommendations will inform the work of the Children Service Unit of the Ministry which is at present intensifying its campaign to ensure that children are protected and provided for.

Disadvantaged children

64. Disadvantaged children or children without any parents are either placed in the custody of relatives or in special homes. This is a matter for the Adoption Board, which is under the purview of the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security. There is, however, a need for the Government to establish appropriate mechanisms to address the needs of children who are abandoned, abused, disabled or live in the streets. The Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security is currently in the process of developing new laws which would augment existing legislation and more adequately protect the rights of these children. This work is now in progress under the auspices of the Children Service Unit of the Ministry.

65. The Children Service Unit will also be taking action on a number of recommendations aimed at improving life for the children. Some of these are:

(a) The establishment of more centres for street children which would provide food, security and bath facilities;

(b) Raising maintenance rates substantially and ensuring that there is an adequate basis for compliance;

(c) Ensuring that there are effective provisions in the Domestic Violence Bill to protect children;

(d) Promoting foster care by enacting legislation.

66. A National Plan of Action is also being drafted by the National Commission for Children which is headed by the first lady, Mrs. Janet Jagan. It is expected that funds for this programme will be provided by the United Nations.

Article 11 - The right to an adequate standard of living

Standard of living

67. The current standard of living in Guyana is very low for a large percentage of the population. At the beginning of the 1990s, Guyana's economic and social indicators pointed to a per capita income of approximately US$ 360. This figure has prompted the World Bank to rate Guyana as one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere. With huge debt payments of more than 70 per cent of revenue obtained, there are inadequate budgetary allocations for wages and salaries, other charges and counterpart funds for health, education and social assistance for the destitute.

68. The Government has set the poverty line at about US$ 49 per month at a rate of G$ 130 to US$ 1, but is forced to pay a basic minimum wage of US$ 42. The Guyana Public Service Union has, however, stated that US$ 148 monthly is required for the consumption of essential goods and services.

Right to adequate food

69. Under the present circumstances, not everyone has access to adequate food. While information is limited, two surveys, which were conducted in 1991 and 1993 respectively, showed that approximately one fifth of all children in the under-five age group were malnourished. This situation was more prevalent in the lower income groups. It is possible that the malnutrition level may be much higher since the population in the hinterland regions was not included in the survey.

70. The situation has been aggravated by the institution of the previously mentioned Structural Adjustment Programme. Under this programme, previous subsidies on some basic commodities were removed resulting in substantial price increases and greater hardships for the poorer sections of the population. However, since 1987 data from Health Care Clinics have shown a downward trend in malnutrition. In 1987, 23.2 per cent of clinic attenders were classified as severely or moderately malnourished; in 1990 this figure had decreased to 18.3 per cent while in 1992 it had dropped to 16.7 per cent. These figures should, however, be taken against a background of the non-attendance of children in the lower income group at the clinics.

71. In a 1991 National Food and Nutrition Policy Paper, prepared by the Guyana Agency for Health Sciences Education, Environment and Food Policy (GAHEF) in conjunction with a number of other organizations including PAHO and the WHO Regional Office, it was concluded that Guyana possesses an extensive food production capacity. However, it was noted that this did not necessarily mean extensive food availability to consumers. Several analyses showed that the nutritional status of various groups was conditioned by income levels, prices and distribution. A crude assessment revealed a sufficiency of energy, protein and fat with a high percentage being domestic contribution to

food availability. It should also be noted that the actual level of food availability was higher than estimated since imports through the parallel market were not included.

72. In an attempt to guarantee access to adequate food the Government is aiming to keep the prices of basic foods at affordable levels. The Nutrition Division of GAHEF is currently developing a Nutrition Action Plan designed to address a variety of nutrition-related issues, including access to food. This Action Plan, when completed, will include time-related goals and nutritional benchmarks. GAHEF also conducts a variety of educational activities on nutrition. Of particular importance is the Community Assessment Surveys which will help in the design of appropriate health education interventions. Health education is also an important component of some of the programmes aimed at combating fatal diseases.

Right to adequate housing

73. The housing situation in Guyana is not satisfactory. Housing shortages have especially plagued the urban areas, and more particularly the city itself as more and more persons migrate from the rural areas to urban locations.

74. The Government's Housing Policy Paper, which was unanimously approved in Parliament, estimates that 90 per cent of the 4,434 houses that have to be supplied annually up to the year 2000 will need to cost below US$ 7,404. At the present low wages and salaries, 84 per cent of households will be unable to purchase the lowest cost unit since ideally, only 25 per cent of household income should be spent on housing. High mortgage interest rates is an additional inhibiting factor. Even at lower interest rates many will still not be able to afford housing at 5 per cent interest rate. About half of all households with an average of 4.36 persons will be excluded; at zero interest rate, 15 per cent will be left out.

75. The shortage of housing may be attributed to several factors such as the escalating cost of rentals as demand for housing outpaces those available, the previous dearth in construction (the rate of dwelling construction between 1980 and 1989 was 2,585 units per year) and the depreciation of those which were previously constructed. As a result of the housing shortage, unregulated squatting has proliferated on the periphery of the city and some rural areas, creating a major obstacle to Government's plans to provide adequate housing.

76. In its Housing Policy Paper the Government has proposed, inter alia, to adopt the community approach in order to realize its plans for the construction of houses. Its aim is to facilitate the building of 21,000 houses by the year 2000 which will be made available to low-income earners under a mortgage plan with reduced interest rates. Under the government schemes, priority is being given to the more disadvantaged families and those who live in overcrowded quarters. Some of these schemes are already in force and it is estimated that US$ 3 million will be spent annually in the construction of low-income houses, with increased activity possible as international financial aid is realized.

77. Since 1993 the Government has distributed more than 1,000 plots of land for residential purposes to persons in several regions of the country. The housing drive has also been boosted by the Squatter Settlement Project which is being implemented through the United Nations Development Programme and the launching of a US$ 50,000 self-help housing project by the group Habitat for Humanity International.

Measures taken to improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food

78. The Ministry of Agriculture is primarily responsible for ensuring that modern methods of production, conservation and distribution of food are employed. The production of rice has been given particular attention as, apart from being a principal export, it also constitutes one of the staple foods of Guyana. The Guyana Rice Development Board, which is a part of the Ministry of Agriculture, is chiefly responsible for carrying out research aimed at the increased production, productivity and marketing of rice. The Board also monitors paddy and rice stocks on a monthly basis to ensure that adequate stocks are retained in the country to fulfil domestic needs.

79. Other sectoral programmes include sugar which is also a major export; milk and milk products; edible oil and fish and shrimp production. Sugar is managed by the Guyana Sugar Corporation, milk by the National Dairy Development Programme, oil by the National Edible Oil Company and fish and shrimp by the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture. Other food products are very diverse as is illustrated in annex IV.

Ecological sustainability and the protection and conservation of food producing resources

80. In general terms measures aimed at ecological sustainability and the protection and conservation of food producing resources have not been implemented in a scientific manner. The necessity of using pesticides which still impact negatively on the environment has been the main inhibiting factor in promoting these objectives. However, it should be noted that more advanced and better drugs which are perceived to be less harmful to the environment are gradually being introduced. The Guyana Rice Development Board has to some extent undertaken to educate farmers on the minimum effective dose of these substances. The Guyana Sugar Corporation is also responsible for the conservation of farmlands.

Agrarian reform

81. To ensure that persons settle on the land, the Government has undertaken to regularize squatting and distribute the land equitably by issuing leases to those who occupy farm land. The leases are usually for a period of 25 years and are renewable. Prior to the institution of this measure, many persons had abandoned the land for more lucrative opportunities.

82. The Government has also increased expenditure on drainage and irrigation. It is rehabilitating canals and refurbishing and replacing irrigators with the help of the Inter-American Development Bank. These measures are expected to

boost production and productivity of the major agricultural products to meet both export and domestic demands.

Article 12 - The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

Physical and mental health status

83. In Guyana the physical and mental health status may be summarized as follows.

84. In 1993 the crude birth rate was 26.5/1,000 while the crude death rate was 6.7/1,000. The total fertility rate was 2.9 per cent per woman. These figures have changed very little over the past 10 years. Life expectancy at birth has declined over the past 10 years. In 1985 the life expectancy was 70 years as compared with 63 in 1986-1987. In 1993 it was estimated at 64 years.

85. The reported infant mortality rate has declined from 43.9/1,000 in 1985 to 34.9/1,000 in 1993. The 10 leading causes of infant mortality are: certain conditions originating in the perinatal period; intestinal infectious diseases; other diseases of the respiratory system; nutritional deficiencies; congenital abnormalities; diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs; diseases of other parts of the digestive system; endocrine, metabolic and immune disorders; signs and symptoms which are ill-defined; and other violence.

86. The 10 leading causes of general mortality are, in descending order: cerebrovascular heart disease; ischaemic heart disease; diseases of the pulmonary circulation; endocrine, metabolic and immune disorders (the most significant is diabetes); hypertensive diseases; other diseases of the respiratory system; diseases of other parts of the digestive system; intestinal infectious diseases; conditions originating in the perinatal period; and other accidents. The vast majority of deaths occur in the 50-plus and less than 1 age groups.

87. The leading causes of morbidity in terms of the number of cases are dental caries, malaria, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS), hypertension, abortion, diabetes, acute respiratory infections, malnutrition in the under-five age group, accidents and injuries, acute diarrhoeral disease and worm infestations. The burden of morbidity in terms of numbers of cases/1,000 population is highest in the interior regions. This level has been attributed mainly to the prevalence of malaria there. Malaria, diabetes and hypertension are common in the 20-64 age group; accidents and injuries and dental caries are particularly prevalent in the 20-44 age group and acute respiratory infections, worm infestation, scabies and acute diarrhoea are most common in the under-five age group.

88. Current data on mental health and disability is not available. A 1981 survey showed that 8 per cent of the population had a disability, and that the prevalence of disability was highest in economically depressed areas. Data from the National Psychiatric Hospital shows that there are very similar numbers of men and women affected by mental health problems. Schizophrenia is

the leading cause of admission to the hospital, followed by mental retardation, marijuana/cocaine use, neurosis, and personality disorders. Although the number of male deaths exceeds the number of female deaths overall, more females than males die from endocrine, metabolic and immune disorders, and hypertensive diseases. Almost all deaths due to "other accidents" are male. In the 5-44 age group, homicide and injury purposely inflicted by other persons, accidental falls, suicide and self-inflicted injury and other violence are the most prevalent causes of death among men.

89. Monitoring changes in health status over time is difficult in the absence of routinely collected and reliable data. It is clear, however, that in terms of morbidity, the number of malaria cases has increased substantially over the past two decades despite its virtual eradication in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

National health policies

90. Ensuring the physical and mental health of the population is a priority task of the Government. All efforts are being made to ensure that every section of the population has access to primary health care by the training of medical personnel. The University of Guyana has instituted a medical programme which has resulted in an increase of trained medical personnel in the country.

91. The Government is also in the process of developing up-to-date national health policies. A Strategic Plan for the period 1994-2000 has recently been provisionally approved. This includes a commitment to primary health care and a series of objectives designed to make implementation a reality.

92. Government allocations to health care have also been increased. Between 1990 and 1994 the percentage of Gross Domestic Product allocated to health increased from 2.9 per cent to 5.6 per cent. Approximately 15 per cent of the Gross National Product has been allocated to the public and private health sectors. Public health-sector allocations as a proportion of the Government's budget not devoted to debt servicing has increased from 8.4 per cent in 1991 to 13.7 per cent in 1994, equivalent to 9.8 per cent of the Gross National Product.

93. Using the indicators as defined by the World Health Organization, the following data refers to article 12:

(a) The reported infant mortality rate was 34/1,000 in 1993. Due to poor record-keeping however, it has not been possible to disaggregate this figure by sex, region, urban/rural/socio-economic group/geographical region;

(b) In 1993, the proportion of the population which had access to safe water was estimated at 83.0 per cent. Between 1990 and 1991, this figure rose to 85.0 per cent then dropped to 84.2 per cent in 1993. In this period 98 per cent of the urban population had access to safe water compared with 78.2 per cent of the rural population. Campaigns by the Government to educate the public on the necessity of using only treated water have to some extent been effective. In the meantime, plans to rehabilitate the existing potable water systems and to provide new services have already been set in train;

(c) Access to adequate excreta facilities is limited. There is no specific data on this subject. However, a National Income and Expenditure Survey undertaken in 1993 showed that approximately 54.6 per cent of households had no arrangements for adequate sewage disposal;

(d) The percentage of infants immunized are as follows:

Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus (DPT)	93 per cent
Measles	80.3 per cent
Poliomyelitis	92 per cent
Tuberculosis	94 per cent

(e) The overall life expectancy is 64.0 (1993);

(f) Most of the population have access to trained personnel for the treatment of common diseases and injuries. There are health centres and health posts around the country which provide necessary care. However, a precise figure for the proportion of the population which has access to trained health personnel within one hour's walk, or travel, with a regular supply of 20 drugs, is not available. It should be noted that while medical care is generally accessible, the supply of drugs is at times unreliable;

(g) In 1993, 19,270 women were seen at ante-natal clinics out of 19,345 reported births. Of the number of reported births, 17,255 women were attended at term. However these figures should be qualified by the fact that not all births are reported, especially those in the hinterland regions;

(h) There is no up-to-date information on the maternal mortality rate. In 1984 the figure was 180/100,000. In 1990, surveys conducted in three of the country's largest hospitals suggest rates ranging from 213/100,000 to 443/100,000;

(i) The proportion of pregnant women who have access to trained personnel during pregnancy is in the majority. Approximately 80 per cent of pregnant women availed themselves of the ante-natal services in the different regions. However, those in the hinterland communities and riverain areas are basically at a disadvantage because of the distance and difficulties in communication. It has been noted also that women who are poorer and have had multiple pregnancies tend to postpone clinic attendance for various reasons. More than 80 per cent of recorded births occur in hospitals while the remaining percentage is generally attended by private midwives or community health workers. From the perspective of hospital delivery, the more disadvantaged group is generally perceived to be indigenous peoples. However, the percentage of attendants at these births is relatively high when compared with a hospital delivery;

(j) The proportion of infants who had access to trained personnel for health care was 20,680 in 1993 for those aged 0-11 months. These were attended at clinics;

(k) Morbidity data reported in health centres and to vector control and Dental Services shows that ill-health is more prevalent in the hinterland regions. In particular, the vast majority of malaria cases occur in these areas. One of the causative factors is the increased economic activity in the region as a result of substantial investments by foreign companies in mining and logging. These activities have led to increased migration to the areas by persons who were not previously exposed to malaria and are therefore very vulnerable to the disease. Poor sanitation measures by the smaller mining concerns have only aggravated the situation.

Measures taken to improve the health status of the population

94. The Ministry of Health has projected a number of measures which should help to improve the health status of the population. The more inaccessible interior regions have been targeted as a priority. Measures include:

(a) Promoting better environmental sanitation in the interior regions to prevent the spread of the malaria-causing mosquitos;

(b) Improving access to treatment of common diseases through increases in the numbers of health personnel to serve these areas;

(c) Providing more boats and increased fuel supplies;

(d) Providing more reliable drug supplies;

(e) More appropriate use of medication to minimize chloroquine resistance.

95. The provisionally approved Strategic Plan for 1994-2000 for the health sector has stated that historically disadvantaged population groups should be a priority. It also targets the reduction of the incidence of malaria as the first priority of the Ministry of Health in decreasing the morbidity rate. The Plan targets the reduction rate of malaria cases from 33,172 per year in 1993 to 10,000 by the year 2000.

96. To reduce the stillbirth rate and the infant mortality rate and to provide for the healthy development of the child, the Ministry of Health is operating a Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programme with support from PAHO and UNICEF. This programme provides ante-natal care; care at birth and immediately after birth; and immunization through the Expanded Programme on Immunization, one of the more successful components of the MCH programme which also targets family planning, food supplementation and growth monitoring.

97. The Government is trying to promote better health by improving all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene in the following ways:

(a) Strengthening the environmental health service;

(b) Updating and introducing new occupational health and safety legislation;

(c) Establishing an Occupational Health Unit in the Ministry of Health.

98. To prevent, treat and control epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases, the Ministry of Health operates a series of vertical programmes to address malaria, filaria, dengue, leishmaniasis, diarrhoeal disease, Hansen's disease, HIV/AIDS, drug/alcohol abuse, eye problems and tuberculosis. Each of these programmes undertakes specific activities to prevent and control these diseases. While hypertension and diabetes are major health problems, there are no specific programmes at present to address them. There is also a Dental Service, a Rehabilitation Service, and a Mental Health Service.

99. Medical service and medical attention to all in the event of sickness are provided by government facilities which offer health care free of charge (at the point of use) to everyone irrespective of income, age, race, class or gender.

100. The health situation of the most vulnerable groups has been addressed by ensuring that health personnel are stationed in remote regions and by ensuring that the MCH programme is operating effectively in the interior as well as coastal regions. However, because of certain weaknesses in the health information system, it is difficult to assess what impact these measures have had, or are having, on the country's most vulnerable population groups.

101. With respect to the elderly, the Government has no specific policies regarding access to care that would discriminate against the elderly. At the same time, it has no policies that actively protect the rights of this population group.

102. Community participation in the planning, organization, operation and control of primary health care has been limited. However, the Strategic Plan has identified the need to develop and implement strategies which will result in increased community involvement in these areas.

103. There is a Division of Health Education which has been part of a government agency, the Guyana Agency for Health Sciences Education, Environment and Food Policy (GAHEF). This agency's health-related functions are currently being reintegrated into the Ministry of Health.

104. The Health Education Division currently carries out a variety of educational activities, and a particular area of interest is Community Assessment Surveys which will help in the design of appropriate health education interventions. Health education is also an important component of some of the vertical programmes, especially HIV/AIDS.

105. A draft Mental Health Bill is now being considered which seeks to update the Mental Hospital Ordinance of 1930 and establish the foundation for a modern mental health service. The draft provides for the Minister of Health of the country to elaborate a National Policy on Mental Health within six months of the relevant law being enacted. The draft further provides for the licensing of psychiatric hospitals and wards and the creation of a Mental Health Advisory Board which will, among other things, consider complaints concerning unlawful detention. The draft also provides for certain rights to be conferred on patients with mental disorders including the right to apply to the courts to review admission, detention and discharge, and the right to legal representation at the cost of the State if necessary.

106. International assistance is currently providing approximately 30 per cent of health sector funds. Most of this assistance is in the form of loans, the most significant of which is from the Inter-American Development Bank. A large part of the loans are being used for the construction of a new Ambulatory/Diagnostic/Surgery Care Centre at the National Referral Hospital. Other donor assistance comes from PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, the European Union and the World Bank. Assistance from the World Bank is disbursed through a Social Impact Amelioration Programme which includes rehabilitation of health centres, food supplementation and support for the Vector Control Service. The MCH programme is especially reliant on international assistance from PAHO/WHO and UNICEF.

Article 13 - The right of everyone to education

107. Before 1976 the education system in Guyana consisted of both private and public institutions. After 1976 a system of free education was introduced from the nursery to the tertiary level by the Government which assumed full responsibility for formal education. This step was taken with the aim of providing equal opportunities for all children.

108. In September 1994 the Government was forced to review this step in relation to the University of Guyana. In order to improve the standards of the university and attract and retain qualified staff, it was forced to institute a cost recovery programme. To alleviate any financial difficulties which may be caused by this system, several options were developed to assist students in paying tuition fees. These are:

(a) Direct payment by the student;

(b) Loans which may be obtained from a fund specially provided by Government for that purpose;

(c) Sponsorship (or scholarship) by his/her employer or other agency.

The education system in Guyana

109. The education system in Guyana is based on the principles of non-discrimination and equal access to education. Both males and females are accepted based on the same criteria for admissions. All children, provided that they have attained the required age, can attend school. This also includes the children of immigrants and migrant minorities.

110. Education is provided at nursery, primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels. In addition, there are adult education classes offered by the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE) of the University of Guyana.

111. Education at the nursery level consists of a two-year programme designed to provide very young children with a learning environment which would facilitate their physical, social, emotional and intellectual development as well as the development of basic skills and desirable attitudes to learning. Children are admitted to schools at this level once they have attained the age of three years, nine months by 31 December of the year of entry.

112. Primary education in Guyana is compulsory under the provisions of the Education Act No. 3 of 1876 as amended in 1976. Every child from the age of five years, nine months must attend primary school. Education at this level consists of a six-year programme in academic as well as non-academic subjects. At the end of this programme all pupils are eligible to write the secondary schools entrance examination (SSEE) which places them in the various types of secondary programmes according to their level of performance.

113. Secondary education is available and accessible to all children who have attained the age of 11 years or more. They are normally admitted to secondary schools in accordance with ability shown in the SSEE. There are basically three types of institutions in Guyana which provide secondary education:

(a) The community high schools which offer four-year programmes to students 11 years and over. These students at the end of the third year, write the secondary schools proficiency examination in English language, mathematics, social studies and science. In the fourth year students specialize in one of the following three subject areas: home economics, craft and industrial arts, at the end of which they write the secondary schools proficiency examination part II;

(b) The junior secondary schools offer a multilateral type of programme for a period of five years. They offer subjects in the arts, science and pre-vocational training. However, the emphasis on pre-vocational training is less than that in the community high schools. Courses lead to certification by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and the General Certificate of Examination (London), Ordinary Level. Outstanding students at these examinations are selected to pursue studies in the senior secondary schools for the GCE Advanced Level Examination;

(c) The senior secondary schools provide tuition up to CXC and GCE Advanced Level. It should be noted that tuition in all of these institutions is offered free of cost to children.

114. Technical and vocational training is offered by two Government Technical Institutes, an Industrial Training Centre, two Schools of Home Economics and a School of Agriculture. The Government Technical Institute and New Amsterdam Technical Institute offer courses at two levels - craft and technician. In these institutions, students are exposed to valuable practical experience while serving attachments with industrial establishments. The craft courses offered cover a wide range of activities including carpentry, plumbing, welding and bricklaying. The technician courses offered include mechanical and electrical engineering, building and civil engineering, surveying and telecommunications. The Technical Institutes also offer courses in commerce and secretariat science at certificate and diploma levels. The Guyana Industrial Training Centre offers accelerated training courses of not more than 48 weeks duration in six craft disciplines. These are carpentry, electricity, agricultural mechanics, masonry, welding and plumbing. The Schools of Home Economics provide full-time courses in household management and catering. These students may write external examinations, e.g. CXC, in needlecraft and food and nutrition. The schools also offer evening classes to

accommodate adults who are desirous of acquiring knowledge in home management and craft skills. Full-time courses are normally for two years while evening courses are from three to six months.

115. Agricultural education and training at either certificate or diploma level are offered at the Guyana School of Agriculture. The syllabus includes science subjects, economics and the practical aspects of crop and animal science. On graduation, students are equipped to be teachers, foremen, extension workers and agricultural field assistants. Diploma students are eligible for entry into university. Guyana also participates in the Regional Education Programme for Animal Health Assistants (REPAHA).

116. Teacher training is considered an integral part of the educational system. The teacher training programme falls into two categories:

(a) In-service training for teachers already in the service. This includes the Nursery Teachers Training Programme which lasts for a period of two years and the In-service Primary Teachers Training Programme which is of the same duration;

(b) Pre-service training for individuals intending to make teaching a career. This encompasses primary teacher training which lasts for two years and the secondary teacher training for three years.

117. Training for both residential and non-residential teachers is provided at the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE). All successful graduates receive the Trained Teachers Certificate. Advanced professional training in education is provided in the Faculty of Education, University of Guyana, which offers the Bachelor's Degree in Education for practising teachers who have successfully graduated from the Teacher Training Programme. There is also the Graduate Diploma in Education for practising teachers who have obtained a first degree.

118. Higher Education is provided at the University of Guyana which offers courses leading to a first degree in the Faculties of Agriculture, Arts, Natural Sciences, Education, Health Sciences, Social Sciences and Technology. In addition to these programmes there are a number of diploma and certificate courses in the fields of public administration, personnel management, public communication and international relations. There are also two graduate diploma programmes in education and development studies. At the moment, programmes leading to a Master's Degree are offered in education, Guyanese history, political science, chemistry and geography.

119. Fundamental education for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education is provided to a limited extent by several institutions of learning such as the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education of the University of Guyana, the Adult Education Association - a non-governmental organization - and the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association - also an NGO.

Factors which inhibit the effective realization of the right to education

120. While the introduction of a system of free education appeared to work very well for a while, poor administration and unreliable maintenance, among other things, caused a general decline to set in causing the education standards of the country to drop significantly. The physical condition of many schools is extremely unsatisfactory with poor sanitary facilities and inadequate or non-existent water supply. Inadequate furniture, a high incidence of vandalism and theft and a shortage of qualified personnel, particularly in the areas of mathematics, science, geography and modern languages, are also factors which seriously inhibit the right to education.

121. Other factors such as the shortage of equipment and basic learning materials; low salaries for teachers; the inability to attract competent teachers for service in some hinterland and deep riverain locations; the difficult terrain in hinterland and deep riverain areas which affects easy access to school for children, teachers and officers have all contributed to the decline of the educational system. As a result Guyana is not geared for this information and technology age. About 5-8 per cent of children aged 5-6 years are not attending school. Drop-outs in basic education at age 14 in 1991 constituted 61 per cent while in 1992 the figure was 62.5 per cent. Guyana's results at the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) in mathematics and English are the lowest in the Caribbean. There are too few graduates from high schools in natural sciences due to a lack of trained science teachers and laboratory equipment, a situation which has led to few entrants to the University of Guyana. As a consequence only about 15 per cent of graduates are in the natural sciences.

Steps taken to improve the educational system

122. The Primary Education Improvement Programme (PEIP) is aimed at improving the infrastructure of schools and human resources development. The Programme also intends to review the instructional programmes offered in schools and to facilitate general access to education.

123. The Secondary Schools Reform Programme is another step taken by the Government to improve the system. This Programme is aimed at the qualitative improvement of education at the secondary level and will build on the PEIP. The project is being funded by the World Bank through the Project Preparation Window Facility. The Programme will pilot a common curriculum in the first three years of secondary school after which students will be placed in suitable schools taking into account their abilities.

124. The Distance Education Programme for Teachers in the Hinterland and Deep Riverain Areas is funded by the EEC and aims to implement and upgrade courses for unqualified and untrained teachers in regions 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 and 10; and procure equipment and learning materials for the Resource Centres in these regions.

125. The Guyana In-Service Distance Education (GUIDE) programme is funded by the United Kingdom and is aimed at improving the quality of education at the secondary level by providing in-service school-based training for practising

teachers by the distance education method. This will be a pilot project for two years for a limited target group of untrained teachers.

126. Modular in-service teacher training will initiate the expansion of the CPCE programme which contains modules relating to education theory, methodology, core subjects and specialist subjects.

127. The Government of Guyana continues to address the issue of improving the education system by approving education policies and programmes to improve the quality and efficiency of the education system. The 1990 Education State Paper emphasized: equality of access to education; better management for efficiency and effectiveness; the institution of an instructional programme; human resource development; community relations. With the change of Government in 1992, a new Education Policy Document dated 1994 was developed to further secure for all young people equal access to quality education in a changing political and economic environment.

128. The PEIP is one of the major programmes funded by aid from the Inter-American Development Bank with the purpose of strengthening and improving primary education by the year 2000. The programme considers the following:

(a) Infrastructure - repairs and construction of 53 primary schools to ease overcrowding and to ensure the physical safety of students;

(b) Human resource development - training and teaching at the National Centre for Education Resource Development (NCERD) for in-service teachers and at the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) for pre-service teachers;

(c) Equality of access to tuition for teachers who are stationed in the hinterland and deep riverain areas. The CPCE expanded Hinterland Teachers' Programme caters for the training of teachers in multi-grade teaching.

129. The year 2000 has been targeted for completion of the following:

(a) Rehabilitation of 66 per cent of existing school buildings which are in need of repairs and the installation of basic facilities, e.g. water, toilets, electricity and relevant technology which would provide a positive learning environment. Rehabilitation works are now under way;

(b) The construction of 19 new schools to ease overcrowding in certain areas;

(c) The expansion of existing schools and their refurbishment with necessary equipment which would also cater for the teaching of the physically disabled;

(d) The modification and expansion of existing libraries to provide quality service to the children and the reading public;

(e) The training of approximately 20 per cent of the current number of teachers to promote the effective management of schools and their human, physical and material resources.

Literacy

130. Guyana has a relatively high literacy rate (95.9 per cent of the population in 1994) in the context of the prevailing criteria which define literacy. Consequently, it does not face a literacy problem. However, an evaluation of the output of the educational system has revealed a need for greater functional literacy in individuals so as to ensure maximum participation in all aspects of national life. To this end, individual agencies/organizations have implemented different programmes to promote functional literacy. However, this approach was considered to be very fragmented and led to the establishment of a National Council for Adult Education which has been mandated to effect a more coordinated approach to the problem. Statistical information on the results of these actions for the period under review are unavailable.

131. In Guyana illiteracy is considered a stigma and generally there is a hesitancy among adults both in the city and to a greater extent the rural areas to attend literacy classes that are public and open. It becomes incumbent therefore on the organization addressing literacy to arrange programmes and activities in such a way as to encourage attendance by target groups.

132. One of the steps taken to overcome such obstacles was the abolition of the term "literacy class" which was replaced by "reading groups". This change has already shown results with an increase in the number of participants ranging from the absolutely illiterate to the neo-illiterate. There are approximately 500 persons who currently avail themselves of the service offered by the organization. The ratio of males to females is 1:20.

133. There are of course some problems confronting this new approach to literacy. The recruitment of voluntary teachers has become very difficult as many prefer to earn extra income rather than do voluntary work. This problem is compounded by the shortage of suitable books (teaching aids) which could engage the interest of individual participants.

134. With the advent of classes under the new nomenclature, the focus is largely on the poorer rural areas. Religion is no barrier to the literacy thrust in Guyana and anyone could enrol in literacy classes without any discrimination whatsoever.

135. Financing remains a problem in the spread of literacy. As more teachers are employed, equipment and materials and, in particular, books are needed. These are all new demands on the comparatively slender resources of the Adult Education Association which receives approximately 65 per cent of its income from Government for its total literacy education, technical and scientific programmes. Efforts are under way to solicit help by way of annual contributions from private firms and other groups and individuals.

136. For several reasons graduation ceremonies have been low-key. There has been no period when all participants have reached an acceptable point for graduation. Some leave the classes when they think they have learnt enough to suit their particular purpose. Others are shy even to display an earned certificate which shows that they have recently become literate. The

formality of a ceremonial graduation is therefore not widely accepted by the participants and as such is not pursued by the Administration.

137. The International Literacy Year (ILY) programme was introduced in 1992 and resulted in the increased awareness of the importance of a literate population to national development. The advent, therefore, of the reading groups has assisted participants and encouraged others to attend classes. The programme was also boosted by donations from benefactors who have, at their own expense, brought into the country crates of reading materials for use in the reading groups.

Extent of equal access to education

138. There is no significant difference in equal access to the various levels of education and measures to promote literacy among men and women. However, regardless of the various mechanisms put in place for the practical enjoyment of the right to different levels of education and the promotion of literacy, there are still vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Guyana.

139. It has been observed that such situations prevail mainly because of socio-economic factors, particularly high inflation rates, and geographical locations. The disadvantaged groups are generally perceived to be low-income families, the children of single parents, the indigenous peoples in the remote hinterland areas and the physically and mentally disabled.

140. The State, with its limited resources, has attempted to make provisions for special schools to cater for the visually impaired and the mentally and physically disabled. There are two notable institutions.

141. The Government has instituted several measures to assist students from the hinterland regions to continue from the primary level through to the secondary. One of these is the granting of scholarships to those students who have done very well at the primary level. To date there are no special scholarships for higher education with respect to hinterland students. Those who are desirous of pursuing higher education must do so through the regular channels.

142. The Government continues to be committed to providing increased access to education at all levels of society. Its policy is therefore aimed at sustaining free education at both the primary and secondary levels.

Language facilities

143. The first language of the country is English which is spoken by all Guyanese. Apart from this there is the dialect termed "Creolese" which is spoken by almost all persons in the country. The indigenous peoples also speak their own language. However, formal classes are conducted in English. Where possible, Amerindian teachers adopt a bilingual approach to teaching.

Conditions of teaching staff in relation to the Recommendation concerning the status of teachers adopted on 5 October 1966 by UNESCO

144. All permanent teachers are appointed by the Teaching Service Commission, an autonomous body established in 1978 to deal with the appointment, promotion, and discipline of teachers.

145. Promotion is normally done after vacancies are advertised so that all eligible teachers have equal opportunities to gain promotion.

146. All non-administrative teachers are placed on the same salary scale. Since 1972 there has been equal salaries for the administrative staff of both primary and secondary schools.

147. Because of a history of separate negotiations of teachers' salaries, teachers receive a different salary from civil servants with comparable qualifications or experience.

148. In remote areas station and other allowances are paid to teachers. Living quarters are also provided.

149. The Ministry of Finance has committed itself to salary increases for teachers over the next two years.

150. In 1990 approval was granted for the establishment of private schools. To date five such schools have been founded.

Role of international assistance in the full realization of the rights enshrined in article 13

151. International assistance takes the following forms: grants; loans; scholarships; teacher exchange programmes; provision of consultants to advise on projects, use of equipment and evaluation of programmes; production of text and exercise books; donation of equipment; donation of substances for the preparation of milk and biscuits.

Article 15 - The right to take part in cultural life

152. As a country which has six races, Guyana possesses a rich and diverse cultural life. The State honours and respects the different cultures which make up the society and seeks constantly to promote national appreciation of them at all levels. One of the measures taken by the Government was to make available an annual budget under capital and current expenditure to support the development of culture in Guyana. Individuals can approach the relevant agencies for funding to develop cultural skills. The Government also supports, sometimes fully, and at other times partially, the cultural life of the country through subsidies and indirect financial aid to theatres, museums, libraries, the School of Art and Music and other bodies which have a cultural role. The Government's respect for the diverse cultural life of the country is amply reflected in the proclamation of national holidays to mark various religious and cultural events. These include the religious events associated with Islam, Hinduism and Christianity.

153. The media play an important role in promoting public awareness of religious and cultural events. However, it is the general feeling that more can be done to educate the public. Some suggestions include the production of articles, shows and documentaries which would serve to promote tolerance at all levels.

154. The National Heritage is administered through the National Trust, a body which was constituted to ensure the preservation of the Natural Heritage. There is also the Heritage Society, a non-governmental organization. Over the years the National Trust has not been active due to the lack of financial support from either public or private funding. This situation is the same for the National Archives and to some extent the library system.

155. Legislation to protect the freedom of artistic creation and performance is now being formulated. This is part of the larger effort to enact legislation to give effect to the provisions of the legal instruments under the World Intellectual Property Organization to which Guyana recently became a party.

156. There are schools of art and dance which play an important role in enhancing cultural life. The School of Art offers four-year programmes in various artistic expressions. The National School of Dance has a continuous programme and also offers a one-year course in dance for teachers in this field.

157. Apart from the specialized schools, programmes are offered in the secondary schools in the arts. Publication of pamphlets, periodicals, journals, workshops, seminars, exhibitions and performances are also some of the means of promoting art and culture.

158. Guyana is noted for its cultural diversity to which the contribution of the indigenous peoples is very significant particularly in the areas of dance, art and craft. Excavation and exploration into specific hinterland areas reveal valuable insights into the history and archaeology of these ancient peoples; this, in turn, provides important information on the pre-Columbian history of Guyana. Artifacts of Amerindian culture are preserved at the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology.

159. The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Cultural Development is formulating a policy that will address the question of the marketing of Amerindian arts and crafts nationally and internationally, and that of promoting the culture of the indigenous peoples locally.

160. Efforts are made to promote an awareness of indigenous culture and to preserve indigenous languages through language classes, reading groups and adult interest groups. Work is also being done to update an Arawak dictionary.

161. The Amerindian Research Unit at the University of Guyana is expected to play a major role in the preservation and promotion of indigenous culture.